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**IN THE CLAIMS**

Claims 1-3 (canceled).

Claim ~~4~~<sup>2</sup> (currently amended): A table or counter mat according to claim ~~[[3]]~~<sup>1</sup> wherein the nitrile rubber is in the range of less than 2 mm thick with a ~~density~~ weight per unit area of about 1000 grams per square meter.

Claim 5 (canceled).

Claim ~~6~~<sup>7</sup> (currently amended): A table or counter mat according to claim ~~[[5]]~~<sup>1</sup> wherein the intermediate layer is formed from a non-woven polyester.

Claim ~~7~~<sup>7</sup> (currently amended): A table or counter mat having a composite sheet structure comprising:

a top textile surface layer;

a non-slip backing layer;

and an intermediate stabilization and support layer aiding joining and support of the top textile surface layer to the non-slip backing layer while allowing the top textile surface layer of the resultant mat to be absorbent;

the non-slip backing layer is formed from a nitrile rubber curable at temperatures greater than 100°C and preferably at about 170°C such that the mat is able to be laundered in hot water;

the intermediate stabilization and support layer is formed from a non-woven polyester, and

the top textile surface layer is a non-woven polyester with a pile height substantially in the range of 3 to 7 millimeters, with the intermediate stabilization and support layer and the top textile surface layer combined with the non-slip backing layer **forming providing** a top liquid absorbent textile of less than 4 millimeters which is continuous and consistent and maintains relative position for printing a detailed image thereon and maintaining position to display the detailed image.

Claim 8 (canceled).

Claim ~~9~~<sup>3</sup> (currently amended): A table or counter mat according to claim ~~[[8]]~~<sup>1</sup> wherein the textile marking is formed by a sublimation textile printing process.

Claim ~~10~~<sup>3</sup> (previously presented): A table or counter mat according to claim ~~9~~<sup>3</sup> wherein the sublimation printing occurs at greater than 100°C and preferably greater than 170°C such that the mat is able to be laundered in hot water.

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Claim <sup>34</sup>1 (currently amended): A table or counter mat having a composite sheet structure comprising:

a non-slip backing layer;

a top liquid absorbent textile surface; and

an intermediate stabilization and pile support layer joining the backing layer according to claim 10 the textile surface and aiding support of the textile surface, with the textile surface having a pile height less than 7 millimeters adapted for resting cups, mugs or glasses and for retaining an element of absorbency, wherein the resultant mat is readily able to be laundered, wherein the non-slip backing layer is formed from rubber, wherein the non-slip backing layer is formed from a nitrile rubber, wherein the intermediate stabilization and pile support layer comprises a heat curable material curable at temperatures greater than 100°C and preferably at about 170°C such that the mat is able to be laundered in hot water, wherein the textile surface includes a textile marking providing a coloring, a print or an advertising message viewable from above, wherein the textile marking is formed by a sublimation textile printing process, wherein the sublimation printing occurs at greater than 100°C and preferably greater than 170°C such that the mat is able to be laundered in hot water, wherein the top liquid absorbent textile surface is formed from a polyester surface with a pile height substantially in the range of 3 to 7 millimeters.

Claim <sup>5</sup>12 (currently amended): A table or counter mat according to claim <sup>1</sup>[(8)] 12 wherein the top liquid absorbent textile surface is formed from a tufted nylon cut pile surface.

Claim <sup>1</sup>13 (currently amended): A table or counter mat having a composite sheet structure comprising:

a non-slip backing layer;

a top liquid absorbent textile surface; and

an intermediate stabilization and pile support layer joining the backing layer according to claim 12 the textile surface and aiding support of the textile surface, with the textile surface having a pile height less than 7 millimeters adapted for resting cups, mugs or glasses and for retaining an element of absorbency, wherein the resultant mat is readily able to be laundered, wherein the non-slip backing layer is formed from rubber, wherein the non-slip backing layer is formed from a nitrile rubber, wherein the intermediate

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stabilization and pile support layer comprises a heat curable material curable at temperatures greater than 100°C and preferably at about 170°C such that the mat is able to be laundered in hot water, wherein the textile surface includes a textile marking providing a coloring, a print or an advertising message viewable from above, wherein the top liquid absorbent textile surface is formed from a tufted nylon cut pile surface, wherein the textile surface has a density weight per unit area of about 600 grams per square meter.

Claim <sup>14</sup> (previously presented): A table or counter mat according to claim <sup>13</sup> wherein the textile marking is formed by an acid dye process.

Claims 15 and 16 (canceled).

Claim <sup>17</sup> (currently amended): A method of forming a table or counter mat including:

- a) forming a nitrile rubber sheet material as a backing layer;
- b) forming a top textile surface layer by combining a non-woven polyester fabric with a non-woven polyester stabilization and pile support fabric; and
- c) aligning the top and backing layers and compressing the layered materials by a heated platen for selected time duration, pressure and temperature settings according to claim 16 cure and bond the nitrile rubber backing layer to the top textile surface layer;  
wherein the resultant table or counter mat lays flat and is able to support stably a glass or other similar liquid vessel with the table or counter mat being liquid absorbent to absorb any spilled liquid, wherein the curing and bonding of the nitrile rubber backing layer to the top textile surface layer occurs at greater than 100°C and preferably greater than 170°C such that the mat is able to be laundered in hot water.

Claim <sup>18</sup> (currently amended): A method of forming a table or counter mat ~~according to claim 16~~ further including:

- a) forming a nitrile rubber sheet material as a backing layer;
- b) forming a top textile surface layer by combining a non-woven polyester fabric with a non-woven polyester stabilization and pile support fabric;
- c) aligning the top and backing layers and compressing the layered materials by a heated platen for selected time duration, pressure and temperature settings to cure and bond the nitrile rubber backing layer to the top textile surface layer;

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wherein the resultant table or counter mat lays flat and is able to support stably a glass or other similar liquid vessel with the table or counter mat being liquid absorbent to absorb any spilled liquid; and

providing a sublimation printing process by placing a screen printed or digital image printed paper which carries the required design on the top textile surface layer with print face down and activating a heat platen to press the screen printed or digital image printed paper to the top textile surface layer under a selected heat, pressure and time duration.

Claim 19 (canceled).

Claim 20<sup>37</sup> (currently amended): A method of forming a table or counter mat including:

- a) forming a nitrile rubber sheet material as a backing layer;
- b) forming a top textile surface layer which is non-tufted and is continuous and has a density and a pile height substantially in the range of 3 to 7 millimetres able to be printed thereon by sublimation printing;
- c) aligning the top and backing layers;
- d) compressing the aligned materials by a heated platen for a selected time duration, pressure and temperature settings according to claim 19 cure and bond the nitrile rubber backing to the top textile layer so that the resultant table or counter mat lays flat and is able to support stably a glass or other similar liquid vessel and the table or counter mat is liquid absorbent to absorb any spilled liquid;

wherein the curing and bonding of the nitrile rubber backing to the top textile surface layer occurs at greater than 100°C and preferably greater than 170°C such that the mat is able to be laundered in hot water;

e) placing a screen printed, offset or digital image print paper which carries a detailed image on the top textile layer surface of the bonded resultant table or counter mat with print face down; and

f) activating a heat platen to press the screen printed, offset or digital image print paper to the top textile surface layer under selected heat, pressure and time duration and at greater than 100°C and preferably greater than 170°C such that the mat is able to be laundered in hot water, with the top supported textile surface layer bonded with the backing layer forming a top liquid absorbent textile of less than 4 millimeters which is continuous and consistent and maintains relative position for printing the detailed image

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thereon and maintaining position to display the detailed image, with the top textile surface layer formed by a non-woven non tufted polyester and an intermediate layer of a non-woven polyester.

Claim 21 (canceled).

Claim 22 (canceled).

Claim ~~23~~<sup>8</sup> (currently amended): A table or counter mat having a composite sheet structure comprising:

a top fabric layer;

a non-slip backing layer;

a part of the top fabric layer able to be joined to the non-slip backing layer while allowing the top fabric layer of the resultant mat to be absorbent;

the non-slip backing layer is formed from a nitrile rubber in the range of less than 2 mm thick with a density weight per unit area of about 1000 -1200 grams per square meter and curable at temperatures greater than 100°C such that the mat is able to be laundered in hot water;

the top fabric layer being a knitted polyester fabric which when combined with the non-slip backing layer ~~forms~~ providing a top liquid absorbent textile of less than 4 millimetres which is continuous and consistent and maintains relative position for printing a detailed image thereon and maintaining position to display the detailed image.

Claim ~~24~~<sup>8</sup> (previously presented): The mat according to claim ~~23~~<sup>8</sup> with the non-slip backing layer being curable at temperatures greater than 170°C.

Claim ~~25~~<sup>9</sup> (previously presented): The mat according to claim ~~24~~<sup>9</sup>, wherein the top fabric layer includes a polyester surface.

Claim ~~26~~<sup>9</sup> (previously presented): The mat according to claim ~~24~~<sup>9</sup>, wherein the top fabric layer includes a polyester surface.

Claim 27 (canceled).

Claim ~~28~~<sup>12</sup> (currently amended): A table or counter mat comprising, in combination: a non-slip backing layer; and a top liquid absorbent polyester textile layer joined to the non-slip backing layer to form a composite sheet structure which is readily able to be laundered, with the top liquid absorbent textile layer having a density weight per unit area of about 200 to 600 grams per square meter to stably support cups, mugs or glasses, to absorb any spilled liquid from

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the cups, mugs or glasses supported thereon, and to provide a message communication covering with clarity.

Claim <sup>13</sup>29 (previously presented): The table or counter mat according to claim <sup>12</sup>28 with the non-slip backing layer having a thickness, with the top liquid absorbent textile layer having a height, with a ratio of the height of the top liquid absorbent textile layer to the thickness of the non-slip backing layer being about 10 to 1.

Claim <sup>16</sup>30 (previously presented): The table or counter mat according to claim <sup>13</sup>29 with the thickness of the non-slip backing layer being less than about 2 mm.

Claim <sup>18</sup>31 (previously presented): The table or counter mat according to claim <sup>16</sup>30 with the top liquid absorbent textile layer being a tufted synthetic yarn cut pile surface with a pile height of about 6 mm and a pile weight of about 600-620 grams per square meter.

Claim <sup>19</sup>32 (previously presented): The table or counter mat according to claim <sup>18</sup>31 with the thickness of the non-slip backing layer being about 1 mm.

Claim <sup>20</sup>33 (currently amended): The table or counter mat according to claim <sup>19</sup>32 with the non-slip backing layer is formed from rubber having a density weight per unit area of about 1000 grams per square meter.

Claim <sup>21</sup>34 (previously presented): The table or counter mat according to claim <sup>20</sup>33 further comprising, in combination: an intermediate stabilization layer joining the non-slip backing layer to the top liquid absorbent textile layer.

Claim <sup>22</sup>35 (previously presented): The table or counter mat according to claim <sup>21</sup>34 with the intermediate stabilization layer formed of synthetic thermally bonded non-woven fabric.

Claim <sup>23</sup>36 (previously presented): The table or counter mat according to claim <sup>22</sup>35 with the intermediate stabilization layer having a density of 110 grams per square meter and a tensile strength of 190 Newtons per 5 cm with a maximum elongation of plus 30% and a tear strength of 140 Newtons, with the intermediate stabilization layer formed of a material curable at temperatures greater than 100°C such that the composite sheet structure can be laundered in hot water.

Claim <sup>14</sup>37 (previously presented): The table or counter mat according to claim <sup>12</sup>28 with the top liquid absorbent textile layer being a tufted synthetic yarn cut pile surface with a pile height of about 6 mm and a pile weight of about 600-620 grams per square meter.

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17  
Claim ~~32~~<sup>16</sup> (currently amended): The table or counter mat according to claim ~~30~~<sup>16</sup> with the top liquid absorbent textile layer being a synthetic, scrim supported, fiber needlefelt having a density weight per unit area of about 500 grams per square meter.

24  
Claim ~~39~~<sup>17</sup> (previously presented): The table or counter mat according to claim ~~38~~<sup>17</sup> with the thickness of the non-slip backing layer being about 1 mm.

25  
Claim ~~40~~<sup>24</sup> (currently amended): The table or counter mat according to claim ~~39~~<sup>24</sup> with the non-slip backing layer having a density weight per unit area of 1000 grams per square meter.

15  
Claim ~~41~~<sup>15</sup> (previously presented): The table or counter mat according to claim ~~38~~<sup>13</sup> with the thickness of the non-slip backing layer being about 1 mm.

26  
Claim ~~42~~<sup>26</sup> (previously presented): A table or counter mat comprising, in combination: a non-slip backing layer; and a top liquid absorbent textile layer joined to the non-slip backing layer to form a composite sheet structure, with the top layer absorbent textile layer having a height, with the non-slip backing layer having a thickness, with a ratio of the height of the top liquid absorbent textile layer to the thickness of the non-slip backing layer being about 1 to 1.

27  
Claim ~~43~~<sup>27</sup> (previously presented): The table or counter mat according to claim ~~42~~<sup>26</sup> with the thickness of the non-slip backing layer being less than about 2 mm.

28  
Claim ~~44~~<sup>28</sup> (previously presented): The table or counter mat according to claim ~~42~~<sup>26</sup> with the thickness of the non-slip backing layer being about 1 mm.

29  
Claim ~~45~~<sup>29</sup> (previously presented): The table or counter mat according to claim ~~44~~<sup>28</sup> with the top liquid absorbent textile layer being a surface with a pile height of about 2 mm.

30  
Claim ~~46~~<sup>30</sup> (previously presented): A table or counter mat according to claim ~~44~~<sup>28</sup> with the top liquid absorbent textile layer formed from a polyester surface with a pile height substantially in the range of 3 to 7 millimeters.

Claim 47 (canceled).

31  
Claim ~~48~~<sup>31</sup> (currently amended): The table or counter mat comprising, in combination: a non-slip backing layer; and a top layer joined according to claim 47 the non-slip backing layer to form a composite sheet for resting cups, mugs or glasses on the top layer, with the top layer consisting of synthetic textile surface of a high weight per unit area capable of stably supporting such cups, mugs or glasses resting on the top layer and being liquid absorbent to absorb any liquid spilled from such cups, mugs or glasses resting on the top

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layer, with the high ~~density~~ weight per unit area being about 200 to 600 grams per square meter.

Claim <sup>32</sup>~~49~~ (currently amended): The table or counter mat according to claim <sup>31</sup>[[47]] ~~48~~ with the thickness of the non-slip backing layer being less than about 2 mm.